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The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Gospel of John in Egypt

Juan Chapa
Facultad de Teología, Universidad de Navarra, 31080 Pamplona, Spain
jchapa@unav.es

Abstract
The numerous manuscripts of John among the earliest Christian papyri have given rise to discussion and speculation. It has been suggested, on the grounds of an alleged preference for the Fourth Gospel among gnostics, that the high number of papyri of John compared to other gospels would favour Walter Bauer's thesis of the 'heterodox' character of early Christian Egypt. The obscurity which veils the origins of the early Egyptian Church allows for conjectures of this kind. However, recent studies on the reception of the Fourth Gospel in the early Church and newly published papyri show that the abundance of early manuscripts of John is not necessarily indicative of the gnostic nature of early Christianity in Egypt. This paper attempts to shed additional light on the issue by comparing early papyri of John with other pieces of Christian evidence.

Keywords
Gospel of John, reception, Early Christian Egypt, NT papyri

P.Oxy LXXI 4803-4806 are the most recently published fragments of the Gospel of John,[1] and mean that the number of papyri of John rises to 31, out of a total of 124 New Testament papyri. This proportion of early New Testament manuscripts devoted to John has been seen as a sign of the popularity of the Fourth Gospel in Egypt and a hint of the 'heterodox'[2] character of the early Egyptian Church. In 1967, at which time seventeen

[1] J. Chapa, 'Four fragments of the Gospel of John', in R. Hatzilambrou, P. J. Parsons, J. Chapa et al., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, LXXI (London: British Academy–Egypt Exploration Society, 2007) 1-14.

[2] Since the words 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' may be anachronistic in this period, they are employed here between inverted commas.

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papyri of John had been published, out of a total of 76 New Testament papyri, and nine of those seventeen were early texts (down to the first half of the fourth century), K. Aland suggested that the preponderance of John among the earliest Christian papyri favoured Walter Bauer's thesis that the most primitive form of Egyptian Christianity was 'heterodox', and specifically 'gnostic'.[3]

The grounds for Aland's arguments are the opposition that the Gospel of John seems to have encountered to being accepted into the New Testament canon and, apparently, the distrust that 'orthodoxy' manifested towards the Fourth Gospel. On this Aland follows Bauer's view, which the latter states as follows: 'If we listen to the sources without prejudice, it seems to me that this is the result: a current of caution with regard to the gospel of John runs continuously through *ecclesiastical* Rome, that center of orthodoxy, right up to almost the end of the second century—a mood that manifests itself through silence and through explicit rejection'.[4] To this suspected rejection of the Fourth Gospel by 'orthodox' Christianity Aland adds the view, which he takes for granted, that John was the gospel most used by gnostics: 'We can see how gnostics of all tendencies preferred the Gospel of John—which produced a radical rejection of Johannine writings in certain circles'.[5] And he concludes—cautiously, it must be said—that the extensive use of John in Egypt, as shown by the large number of early papyri, favours Bauer's thesis that the lack of information from Christian Egypt before the end of the second century and the silence of Eusebius on the Eastern Church are signs of the 'heterodox' character of the early Church in Egypt until bishop Demetrius and the emergence of the catechetical school. The German scholar states: 'If we start from the early papyri, the relative high number of texts from the Gospel of John could support Bauer's thesis'.[6]

Aland's modest proposal would be plausible were not the grounds for his arguments conditioned by a blend of presuppositions and little evidence. The number of papyri is low and the relationship between 'heterodoxy' and Egypt, and the relations between the Fourth Gospel and

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3) K. Aland, *Studien zur Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments und seines Textes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967) 99-103.

4) W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr 1932; Eng. trans. R. A. Kraft and G. Krodel, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, London: SCM, 1972) 210, quoted in Aland, *Studien*, 101.

5) Aland, *Studien*, 102.

6) Ibid.

gnostics, are not self-evident. Although many of these issues have been revised since Aland published his work, there still remains a tendency to explain the preponderance of manuscripts of John in terms of gnostics and Egypt.[7] For this reason, in the light of the actual number of published papyri of John and the evidence we have for the use of the Fourth Gospel in Egypt, this paper intends to test Aland's view and determine whether the new data confirm Bauer's thesis or allow us to say something about the early tendencies of Egyptian Christianity. First, I will refer briefly to the reception of Bauer's thesis about the 'heterodox' character of the early Church in Egypt and modern views on the use of the Gospel of John by gnostic groups.

i) The thesis of Bauer has been very influential. H. Idris Bell, in his study of Egyptian religious practices in Graeco-Roman times, wrote that 'the Egyptian church was deeply affected by gnosticism'.[8] Robert Grant, in the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, was even more explicit: 'In the second century, as far as our knowledge goes, Christianity in Egypt was almost exclusively heterodox'.[9] Since then this opinion has been corrected in many respects and the view that advocates a 'heterodox' nature of early Egyptian Christianity is not dominant.[10] Rather, stress has been placed on the Jewish character of the Christian origins in Egypt and the diversity of tendencies among Christians at that period, who included 'orthodox' and various kinds of gnostic and non-gnostic 'heterodox' groups.[11] Nevertheless, as

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[7] Colin Roberts, who was a clear opponent of Bauer's thesis, also speaks of the number of texts both of the Fourth Gospel and of Genesis, as a sign of the vigour of 'gnosticism': 'The strength of Gnosticism cannot be simply estimated by the ratio of specifically Gnostic books to others, and the striking number of texts both of the Fourth Gospel and of Genesis may well reflect the strength of Gnosticism': C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: British Academy–OUP, 1979) 60.

[8] H. I. Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Liverpool: University Press, 1953) 54.

[9] R. M. Grant, 'The New Testament Canon', in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1: *From the Beginnings to Jerome* (Cambrige: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 298.

[10] For the various types of Christians in the early Church in Egypt and an evaluation of Bauer's thesis see B. A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 194-213; for further studies, see 195 note 3.

[11] See Pearson, *Gnosticism* and id., *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (London: T & T Clark, 2004) 11-81. For a more recent summary see id., 'Egypt', in M. M. Mitchell and F. M. Young (eds.), *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1: *Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 331-350. See also

Birger Pearson points out, Bauer's thesis is 'still popular'[12] and can be perceived in some—mainly biblical—scholars. Bart Ehrman, talking about Walter Bauer's views and seemingly endorsing them, writes that 'the earliest Christians in Egypt were various kinds of Gnostic'.[13] Kurt and Barbara Aland, in their classic book on the text of the New Testament, write: 'Egypt was distinguished from other provinces of the Church, so far as we can judge, by the early dominance of gnosticism.'[14] Another textual critic, Eldon J. Epp, shares the same approach: 'Certainly heterodoxy was the mark of the earliest Egyptian period, which encompassed a variety of practices in Christianity, including Gnostic forms of the young faith'.[15] These samples suffice to show that the view of the 'heterodox' character of early Egyptian Christianity, although not representing the general consensus, is still alive.

ii) On the other hand, an understanding of the special role of the Gospel of John among gnostic groups as their favourite text is practically unanimous in modern scholarship. In a study by Charles E. Hill on the reception of John in the early Church we find abundant testimonies of scholars who

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G. P. Luttikhuizen, *De veelvormigheid van het vroegste Christendom* (Delft: Eburon, 2002; Spanish trans. *La pluriformidad del cristianismo primitivo*, Córdoba: El Almendro, 2007) 119-136; C. W. Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity: From its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1993) 132-34; A. F. J. Klijn, 'Jewish Christianity in Egypt', in B. A. Pearson and J. Goehring (eds.), *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992) 161-175; J. J. Fernández Sangrador, *Los orígenes de la comunidad cristiana de Alejandría* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1994) 167-181.

12) Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity*, 13; id., 'Egypt', 336.

13) B. D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities. The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 174.

14) K. and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*: *An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Eng. trans. E. Rhodes, second edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, from the 1981 German edition) 59. Similar approach is found in M. Simonetti and E. Prinzivalli, *Letteratura cristiana antica. Profilo storico, antologia di testi e due saggi inediti in Appendice* (Casale Monferrato: Piemme Religio, 2003) 36: 'Alla metà del II secolo vediamo questa comunità [cristiana], di cui prima pressoché nulla sappiamo, culturalmente dominata dagli gnostici… La reazione da parte cattolica si sviluppò a partire degli ultimi decenni del secolo'.

15) E. J. Epp, 'The Significance of the Papyri for Determining the Nature of the New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Dynamic View of Textual Transmission', in W. L. Petersen (ed.), *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (Notre Dame–London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) 71-103, at 73 = *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays*, 1962-2004 (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 347.

assume the preferential use of this gospel among gnostics.[16] Hill refers to Walter Bauer as the one who laid the foundations for the modern approach to the Fourth Gospel and points to J. N. Sanders as the main person responsible for consolidating the current consensus. In a brief but very influential study, Sanders wrote: 'The Gospel appears to have been used first of all by the Gnostics, and particularly by the Alexandrians… It was the Valentinians who first ascribed it to 'John'… [The author of the gospel] wrote for people influenced by Proto-Gnostic speculation, and used the language of this speculation, and was accordingly mistrusted by conservative Christians.'[17] Most subsequent Johannine scholarship has followed the same path. Examples could be multiplied, but it will suffice to give a few quotations from some authors reviewed by Hill: 'It is the gnostic heretics themselves who are the first to show certain traces of knowledge of John… Since it seems that the church of Alexandria was not in its earliest days strictly orthodox, it is easy to understand that a gospel proceeding from such a source should at first be looked upon with suspicion by orthodox Christianity' (C. K. Barrett).[18] 'John was first fully accepted and used as authoritative in Gnostic circles; not until Irenaeus does it have the same kind of position in other than Gnostic writers' (Melvyn R. Hillmer).[19] '[The] early appropriation of the Gospel of John by Gnosticism precipitated the durable suspicion that the Gospel taught Gnosticism' (Ernst Haenchen).[20] 'Perhaps some conservative Christians were uneasy about John precisely because it was popular and widely used among

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16) C. E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). He argues that most of the scholars who over the last sixty years have studied the reception of the Fourth Gospel in the first two centuries consider that the Gospel of John faced resistance in the Church. At the beginning it was accepted mainly by gnostics and other 'heterodox' groups, while it was rejected, or at least looked upon with suspicion, by most of the 'orthodox' ecclesiastical figures. Irenaeus 'rescued' it for the Church, showing how it could be used against 'heretics'.

17) J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church. Its Origin and Influence on Christian Theology up to Irenaeus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943) 86. See also Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 15-17.

18) C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: an Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1955) 95 and 109 (1978 edition, 113 and 129). Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 17-18.

19) M. R. Hillmer, *The Gospel of John in the Second Century* (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Apr. 1966) 169. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 26.

20) E. Haenchen, *John: a Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Eng. trans. Robert W. Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 24. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 29.

gnostic Christians and others deemed heretical' (D. Moody Smith).[21] '[The Gospel John] to all appearances was first employed among gnostic Christians' (Harry Y. Gamble).[22] 'The early distribution and usage of the Gospel of John in Egypt is confirmed by external evidence. Several Gnostic writings from Egypt used it, and the first commentaries ever written on any gospel are commentaries on the Gospel of John which derived from Egypt. On the other hand, John's Gospel is not well known elsewhere' (Helmut Koester);[23] '[The Gospel of John was] the product of a Christian-Gnostic-Jewish syncretism within the late Hellenistic era and Roman Empire. The early Catholic church snatched John away from the growing Gnostic movement and canonized it by redaction and the formation of Ephesian legends' (Michael Lattke);[24] 'The GosJn was not considered authoritative or 'canonical' by the early scholars of the church because its apostolic origins were disputed and especially because the Gnostics adopted it as their special gospel' (James H. Charlesworth).[25] Many more examples could be offered, for most Johannine and New Testament scholarship accepts that the Fourth Gospel was the favourite gospel in gnostic circles, especially among Valentinians.[26]

Within this frame and following the lead opened by Bauer,[27] it is also common to point to a close relationship between the Gospel of John and

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21) D. M. Smith, *John Among the Gospels: the Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 7. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 35.

22) H. Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) 33. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 36.

23) H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London–Philadelphia: SCM Press–Trinity Press International, 1990) 245-6. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 38-39.

24) M. Lattke, in M. Franzmann and M. Lattke, 'Gnostic Jesuses and the Gnostic Jesus of John', 'Part II', in H. Preißler and H. Seiwert (eds.), *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag* (Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 1994) 143-54 at 151. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 49.

25) J. H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International 1995) 382. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 49.

26) Hill devotes the first part of his work to reviewing the current consensus on Johannine scholarship. Besides the authors mentioned in the text, he shows the positions of F.-M. Braun, R. Schnackenburg, H. von Campenhausen, T. E. Pollard, R. Brown, F. F. Bruce, M. Hengel, J.-D. Kaestli, J.-M. Poffet, J. Zumstein, W. Röhl, R. Kieffer, R. A. Culpepper, E. Käsemann, L. Schottroff, G. Sloyan, T. Nagel. Of these, according to Hill, only Braun, on the one hand, and Hengel, Röhl and Nagel, on the other, who restrict the use of John virtually to Valentinians, may not be included in the general consensus (Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 13-55).

27) Bauer did not directly relate the Gospel of John to Egypt. He rather noted the silence of 'orthodox' writers on this gospel and the use which gnostics and other 'heterodox' groups

Egypt. J. N. Sanders suggested Alexandria as the place of origin of the gospel,[28] and there are still a few modern interpreters who defend its Alexandrian provenance.[29] In any case it is quite common to suppose a wide circulation of the Gospel of John in Egypt in connection with gnostic authors as some of the scholars quoted above express it.

Nevertheless, the general consensus on John and the gnostics has been challenged by the above mentioned study of Hill.[30] He revises the way in which the Fourth Gospel was used by gnostics and argues that not all gnostics shared an equal appreciation of it. He notes the animosity towards John present in some gnostic literature (*Acts of John*, *Apocryphon*

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made of it. He points out that Ptolemy, Heracleon (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 6,75) and Tatian treasured the Fourth Gospel, and that Gaius and the *alogoi* considered it a forgery (cf. pp. 206-8). For a summary of Bauer's position on the Gospel of John see S. R. Llewelyn, '§ 11. A Fragment of the Gospel of John', in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, VII (1994) 245.

28) Sanders suggested Alexandria as a possible place of origin for the Fourth Gospel, for, according to his understanding, the author of the gospel seemed to fit best into an Alexandrian background; later, Sanders came to think of Syria a more likely place of origin: *The Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Study of the Teaching of the New Testament in the Light of Historical Criticism* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1950) 162.

29) For example, J. J. Gunther, 'The Alexandrian Gospel and Letters of John', *CBQ* 41 (1979) 581-603, who mentions previous scholars who supported an Egyptian origin of the gospel. An intermediate position is held by H. C. Snape, 'The Fourth Gospel, Ephesus and Alexandria', *HThR* 47 (1984) 1-14, who thinks that the author of the gospel was an Alexandrian who settled in Ephesus. A similar approach is that of H. C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: a Work in Two Editions* (London–New York: T & T Clark, 2005), who argues that the first edition of chaps. 1-20 of John originated in Alexandria and an editor in Ephesus wrote chap. 21 and made certain revisions in the other chapters. M. Frenschkowski, 'Τὰ βαΐα τῶν φοινίκων (Joh 12,13) und andere Indizien für einen ägyptischen Ursprung des Johannesevangeliums', *ZNW* 91 (2000) 212–29, has also suggested Egypt as the home of the Johannine circle, on the grounds both that it suits better the early transmission history of the Fourth Gospel and of some of the terms used in John 12:12-19.

30) He names the scholarly consensus on the Fourth Gospel the 'Orthodox Johannophobia Paradigm' and summarises it in three points: 1) The occasional explicit hostility towards the Gospel of John by 'orthodox' writers (Gaius of Rome, the *alogoi* and those mentioned by Irenaeus in *Adv.Haer.* 3,2). 2) The silence of 'orthodox' writers in citing the Fourth Gospel. 3) An affinity for, and preference in the use of, John by gnostic writers (especially Valentinians). The need for a revision of generally accepted views on the Fourth Gospel is also held by A. Magri, 'Notes sur la réception de l'évangile de Jean au II^{e} siècle. L'idée gnostique de canon', in G. Aragione, E. Junod and E. Norelli (eds.), *Le Canon du Nouveau Testament. Regards nouveaux sur l'histoire de sa formation* (Geneve: Labor et Fides, 2005) 117-40, esp. 122-6, and T. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert: Studien zur vorirenäischen Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-gnostischer Literatur* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000).

of James, *Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Second Apocalypse of James*, *Gospel of Thomas*) and concludes that 'rather than Irenaeus being the great innovator… pioneering an orthodox interpretation of the gnostic Gospel of John, it appears that Valentinus, or more probably Ptolemy, was the creative genius who engineered a reinterpretation of the abstract nouns of the Johannine Prologue to adapt to a theory of pleromatic aeons and syzygies which had been borrowed from "the gnostics". Predominantly, the earliest appropriation of John on the part of gnostic writers was adversarial or supersessionary'.[31] Hill admits a positive approach to John on the part of the Valentinians (mainly Ptolemy and Heracleon), but thinks that this approach should not be exaggerated. Valentinians also showed similar attitudes towards the other three gospels, Acts, Paul and other New Testament writings, at a time when the Fourth Gospel was well received as an apostolic gospel among the Great Churches, and had recourse to John just as other Christian factions made use of it for their own interests.[32]

This summary of the influence of Bauer's thesis and the relationship between John and gnostics provides us with the framework to reevaluate Aland's views on the relationship between the papyrus fragments of John and a possible 'heterodox' early Christian Egypt. First, I shall proceed to discuss literary evidence for the Fourth Gospel in Egypt during the second century.

1. Literary Evidence for the Gospel of John in the Early Church in Egypt[33]

It appears that the first known person to have made use of the Fourth Gospel in Egypt was Basilides, who may have left Antioch in Syria and

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31) Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 293.

32) Ibid., 466-8.

33) Determining the presence of a particular text or book of the New Testament in writings of the second century is mined with methodological difficulties: the provenance and date of the writing which quotes or knows the text, the loose distinction between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', a certain fluidity in the transmission of the texts, flexibility in quoting, dependence upon oral tradition, etc. Cf. J.-M. Poffet, 'Indices de réception de l'évangile de Jean au II^{e} siècle avant Irénée', in J.-D. Kaestli, J.-M. Poffet et J. Zumstein, *La communauté Johannique et son histoire: la trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles* (Geneve: Labor et Fides, 1990) 305-21, esp. 306-9. See also Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 1-10, 67-71. The information given in these pages is mainly taken from authors who have already worked on the reception of the gospels in the second century. It is not the aim of this paper to discuss to what extent an Egyptian work did know or did not know the

settled in Alexandria in the first half of the second century.[34] It is likely that the famous teacher knew the Gospel of John. However, the references to John by Basilides have come to us through the account of his teaching given by the third-century writer Hippolytus,[35] and there is debate as to whether they belong to Basilides or to some later followers. In any case the same sources show that Basilides also knew and used the gospels of Matthew and Luke.[36]

It is quite probable that Valentinus, too, knew the Gospel of John in Egypt. He was originally from Phrebonis, in the Nile Delta, and may have written and published in Alexandria, but evidence for his activity relates only to Italy, where he taught.[37] There is, however, no clear evidence that Valentinus used the Fourth Gospel.[38] On the other hand, through some

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Gospel of John, neither does it assume that the authors of those works knew or read the text of the Fourth Gospel as it has reached us.

34) On Basilides, see B. A. Pearson, 'Basilides the Gnostic', in A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen (eds.), *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2005) 1-31; B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures. A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987) 417-18; E. Mühlenberg, 'Basilides', *TRE* 5 (1980) 296-301; W. A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule. Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 1996).

35) Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7,22,4 (John 1:9) and 7,27,5 (John 2:4): in M. Simonetti, *Testi gnostici in lingua greca e Latina* (Milano: Valla/Mondadori, 1993) 158 and 174. For Basilides' use of John, see Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 224-7. Hill states: 'There is certainly no preponderance of Johannine influence in his system, nothing which could justify thinking that John was specially prized by the Basilideans or regarded as unusually conducive to their system of thought' (p. 226).

36) Hippolytus, *Ref.* 7,27,5 (Matthew 2:2); 7,26,9 (Luke 1:35) = *Testi gnostici*, 174 and 170. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3,1,1 refers to Matthew 19:11 = *Testi gnostici*, 146, as used by the Basilideans. See also É. Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (Gembloux: J. Duculot: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1950; reimp. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986) 422-3; W.-D. Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 1987) 373-8. Basilides might have also used the Gospel of Mark, if Irenaeus' discussion of Basilides' version of the crucifixion narrative is authentic. See Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 204. Pearson states: 'We find reflected in Basilides's writings, as we did in the case of Valentinus, the presence in Alexandria of scriptures destined to become canonical in the catholic church' (ibid.).

37) On Valentinus, Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 217-22. For a contrary position see C. Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis. Mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 1992), where the gnostic character of Valentinus is questioned.

38) Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 216-22, esp. 216, note 40, referring to Pagels, Sanders and Von

texts quoted by Clement of Alexandria, it seems that he did know and make use of the Gospel of Matthew.[39]

Whether Carpocrates, the gnostic teacher contemporary with Basilides and coming like him from Egypt, and the Carpocratians used John, we simply do not know.[40]

According to extant data, Heracleon, a disciple of Valentinus, was the first to write a commentary on John.[41] That he taught in Alexandria is possible (Origen says he had disciples in the city), but it seems most likely that he wrote his commentary in the south of Italy around 170-80.[42] In any case, although he surely knew the gospel in his native land, there is no evidence which guarantees a connection between Heracleon's predilec-

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Loewenich in support of this statement. Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 202, thinks that Valentinus probably knew John.

39) Matthew 19:17; 12:43 and 5:8, in *Strom.* 2,114,3-6 (= *Testi gnostici*, 210). See Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 425-6; Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 355-61. Irenaeus says that Valentinus' followers used the four canonical gospels (*Adv. Haer.* 3,11,9). The *Gospel of Truth*, attributed by some to Valentinus, shows the influence of John, but also of Matthew (cf. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 264-70; C. M. Tuckett, 'Synoptic Tradition in The Gospel of Truth and The Testimony of Truth', *JTS* 35 (1984) 131-45; J. A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). But it is not clear that it has an Egyptian origin. According to Hill, 'Valentinian use of written religious authorities, at least as instanced in the *GTr.*, witnesses to the prior existence of a body of new and authoritative Christian literature which was functioning as scripture in the churches from which Valentinians sought converts' (p. 270). See also Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 202.

40) Irenaeus, *Adv.Haer.* 1,25,4 shows Carpocrates making use of the text of Matthew 5:25 = Luke 12:58f. and perhaps referring to Mark 4:10-11 (= *Testi gnostici*, 194). See Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 355-63. Cf. B. A. Pearson, 'Pre-Valentinian Gnosticism in Alexandria', in id. (ed.), *The Future of Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 464; Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 227-9. I do not take into account Carpocrates' possible knowledge of John, as deduced from the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, considering the doubts surrounding this gospel: see S. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax. Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2005) and P. Jeffery, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled*: *Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006).

41) For Heracleon's fragments, see *Testi gnostici*, 222-66. E. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1973). More bibliography in Poffet, 'Indices', 315, note 48. Also A. Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 2002); M. Kaler and M.-P. Bussières, 'Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources', *HTR* 99 (2006) 275-89. On the use of John by Heracleon, see Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 207-11 and Poffet, 'Indices', 315-20.

42) For C. Bammel, 'Heracleon', *TRE* 15 (1986) 54, it is doubtful that Heracleon taught in Alexandria.

tion for John and his Egyptian origin. In his commentary he also includes quotations of, and allusions to, passages in Matthew (as well as allusions to some passages of Paul).[43]

The first firm literary proof for the use of the Fourth Gospel in Egypt comes from Theodotus, a member of the eastern Valentinian School, who taught at Alexandria at some time between 160 and the turn of the century.[44] He made use of the Fourth Gospel as well as the other gospels as authoritative Scripture. Sagnard's edition lists eighteen clear quotations of John out of 31 references or allusions, eight of them coming from the Prologue of the gospel. In respect of the other gospels, there are eleven explicit quotations of Matthew out of a total of 25 references, and ten of Luke out of a total of 23. Mark, as usual, is less attested (four references out of eight). The way in which Theodotus uses the Gospel of John is similar to that of Clement of Alexandria, who wrote at roughly the same time.

If we turn to non-canonical gospels coming from Egypt and other writings which are usually included under the category of 'apocryphal' and might be influenced by gnostic doctrines, we find hardly any hint of the Fourth Gospel, though our fragmentary knowledge of these writings does not allow for the drawing of firm conclusions. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* (not the *Gospel of the Egyptians* found at Nag Hammadi), used by Encratites and perhaps by gnostics as well, is likely to have originated in Egypt in the middle of the second century,[45] but it shows no indication of Johannine thought. In the few extant fragments of the *Traditions of Matthias*, known to us mainly through Clement of Alexandria and considered by some scholars to be of Egyptian provenance and gnostic

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43) Massaux finds ten passages of Matthew quoted or alluded to by Heracleon and considers that his comments on John depend on Matthew (Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 434). He states: '[C]e commentaire de l'évangile de *Jn*., Héracléon le fait â l'aide de l'évangile de *Mt*., auquel il emprunte ses principes d'interprétation. A travers Héracléon, on atteint l'enseignement habituel des réunions valentiniennes dans lequel la place de *Mt*. devait être privilégiée' (p. 439). See also Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 351-4, esp. 354, who plays down Massaux's comments.

44) On Theodotus, *Testi gnostici*, 354-94. F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie. Extraits de Théodote: texte grec, introduction, traduction et notes* (Paris: Cerf, 1948). In Hill's words, '[B]y the time he wrote, then, the Fourth Gospel was already well established in orthodox theology and piety' (Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 212). See also Poffet, 'Indices', 314-15.

45) E. Hennecke–W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 1968; Eng. trans. R. McL. Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha I. Gospels and Related Writings*, Cambridge–Louisville, KY: James Clarke & Co.–Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991) 209-15.

origin,[46] nothing suggests knowledge of John and only a possible relation with the Gospel of Luke can be established.

The presence of John, however, is well attested in gnostic works which might have been written in the second century but have reached us mainly through Coptic translations of a later period. The *Gospel of the Saviour* (Papyrus Berolinensis 22220), perhaps of Egyptian origin, makes use of both Matthew and John, with occasional echoes of Luke and Mark.[47] Among the works found at Nag Hammadi which are thought to have an Egyptian provenance we find the *Teachings of Silvanus*, the *Sentences of Sextus*, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Gospel of Truth*. Of these, the last four know the four canonical gospels;[48] the *Teachings of Silvanus* seem to quote or refer only to John and Matthew.[49] Finally, the *Acts of John*, which some trace to Egypt but equally to Syria or Asia

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46) Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha I*, 382-6, esp. 385.

47) Edited by C. W. Hedrick and P. A. Mirecki, 1999, *Gospel of the Savior: A New Ancient Gospel* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press). Pearson, 'Egypt', 332, includes it in the list of works of Egyptian provenance. The *Strasbourg fragment*, which is dated to the fourth-fifth century and contains gospel-type material in Coptic, has been related to the *Gospel of the Saviour* and the *Acts of John*. See Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha I*, 87-99; S. Emmel, 'Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium = The Strasbourg Coptic Gospel: Prolegomena to a New Edition of the Strasbourg Fragments', in H. G. Bethge *et al.* (eds.), *For the Children, Perfect Instruction (Festschrift H. M. Schenke)* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2002) 353-74.

48) The *Apocryphon of James* and the *Gospel of Truth* display a critical use of John. See Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 250-8, 264-70 and note 39 above. For references to the gospels, see C. A. Evans, R. L. Webb and R. A. Wiebe, *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index* (Leiden: Brill, 1993) 19-41, 228-33, 241-53 and 399-400.

49) See Evans, *Nag Hammadi Texts*, 313-35. The origin of the Nag Hammadi writings is debated. Given the explicit mention of the Son of the Zebedee in the *Apocryphon of John*—which may have brought to Egypt from Syria at the end of the first century or beginning of the second century (see Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 200)—and that this work was found in Egypt, it might be worth mentioning here that this work also knows Matthew and other New Testament writings. Evans, *Nag Hammadi Texts*, 65-87. Rather than representing the concerns of 'Johannine circles', the *Apocryphon* seems to use the Fourth Gospel for 'Christianizing' a pleromatic mythology. See Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 239-42. Another Nag Hammadi text, the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, in which John is also mentioned, knows Matthew and John. Evans, *Nag Hammadi Texts*, 263-7. In his study of the reception of John in five Nag Hammadi texts (*Ap.Jas.*, *Gos.Truth*, *Gos.Phil.*, *Ep.Pet.Phil.*, *Testim.Truth*) Wolfgang Röhl concludes that the Fourth Gospel was not a 'special Gospel' for the authors of these five treatises. See W. G. Röhl, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums in christich-gnostischen Schriften aus Nag Hammadi* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Hochschulschriften. Publications Universitaires Européennes 1991).

Minor,[50] seem to use traditional Synoptic material and know the Gospel of John, but display rejection of it.[51]

We cannot tell to what extent there is a connection between the possible Egyptian origin of Celsus and his acquaintance with John, a gospel which he seems to know, as he also might have known the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, and perhaps Mark.[52] In any case, his knowledge of Christian doctrine does not seem to be based more on one particular gospel than on others.

Within the category of Christian works of non-gnostic provenance which have been related to an Egyptian setting (though their origin has been questioned), we find writings which use or seem to know the Fourth Gospel. One of them is the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the origin of which is sometimes attributed to an Alexandrian environment, although it has also been linked to Asia Minor.[53] The *Epistula* prefers the Fourth Gospel over Matthew and Luke, shows a high regard for John and uses it heavily.[54] Of

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50) E. Hennecke–W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 1968; Eng. trans. R.McL. Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha II. Writings Relating to the Apostles Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (Cambridge–Louisville, KY: James Clarke & Co.–Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) 152-212. In favour of Egypt: E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983) 662ff. In favour of East Syria: K. Schäferdiek, 'The Acts of John', in Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha II*, 152-212. In favour of Asia Minor: P. J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John. A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998) 244-70 and J. N. Bremmer, 'The Apocryphal Acts: Authors, Place, Time and Readership', in id. (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 158f.

51) *Acts of John* know that John is the author of the Fourth Gospel (88,3-5; 89,11; 90,4) and deny that blood flowed from Jesus on the cross (101,8-9). See Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 258-63; Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 461-2.

52) It is not clear where Celsus taught. H. Chadwick, *Origen. Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) xxviii-xxix, argues in favour of Alexandria. Other scholars think of Rome or Alexandria. See M. Frede, 'Celsus philosophus Platonicus', *ANRW* II 36.7 (1994) 5183-5213, esp. 5188-93. For Celsus' use of the Fourth Gospel, see Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 309-11.

53) M. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 2001) 59, and Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament II*, 243-5, support an Egyptian origin. For an Asian provenance, C. E. Hill, 'The *Epistula Apostolorum*: An Asian Tract from the Time of Polycarp', *JECS* 7 (1999) 1-53.

54) Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 366-74, esp. 370-1. See also J.-D. Kaestli, 'Remarques sur le rapport du quatrième évangile avec la gnose et sa réception au IIe siècle', in J.-D. Kaestli, J.- M. Poffet et J. Zumstein, *La communauté Johannique et son histoire: la trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles* (Geneve: Labor et Fides, 1990) 351-6. For the use of Matthew see Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 471-83.

questionable provenance is also the *Letter to Diognetus*, which has been connected with Alexandria, though its origin has also been attributed to Asia Minor or Rome.[55] The author of the letter, apart from being influenced by Paul, refers to 'the faith of the gospels' (11.6), among which Matthew and John must surely be included, as can be deduced from language and conceptions.[56] Another non-gnostic work is the *Preaching of Peter (Kerygma Petri)*, which most likely has an Egyptian origin. It does not seem to depend clearly on the gospels although some expressions suggest that its author might have known the Synoptics and John.[57] The Christian additions to the *Sibylline Oracles*, if they were composed in Egypt, show that their authors knew John and the book of Revelation, although Matthew was at the base of the gospel traditions they used.[58] Finally, in the works of Clement of Alexandria the use of John is similar to that of the Great Church. Clement calls the Fourth Gospel 'the gospel according to John' and states that he himself had received the gospel with the three others (*Strom*. 3, 93, 1). The Alexandrian teacher quotes the gospel, recognizes its divine authority and knows the use which Valentinians and Theodotus had made of it.[59] Nevertheless, the gospel he refers to most is Matthew.[60]

Apart from 'orthodox' works which have been related to an Egyptian setting and seem to use the Gospel of John, there are also some 'orthodox' works and works of non-gnostic character which may also have an Egyp-

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55) E. Norelli, *A Diogneto* (Milano: Paoline, 1991) 42-64, proposes Rome as hypothesis. H. I. Marrou, *A Diognéte* (SChr 33 bis; Paris: Cerf, 1965) 266-7 and 294, suggested, but only tentatively, that it might have been written by Pantaenus.

56) Cf. Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 361-6.

57) W. Schneemelcher, 'The Kerygma Petri', in Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha II*, 34-41. See also Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 400-4.

58) The origin of some books of the *Oracles* is Alexandria, but we do not know whence the additions come. See U. Treu, 'Christian Sibyllines', in Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha II*, 654. For the reception of John and Matthew, see Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 90-95; Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 227-46; Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 309-13.

59) On the use of the Gospel of John by Clement, see Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 121-8, esp. 124-8. 'When Clement wrote, from the late 180s probably into the second decade of the third century… [the Fourth Gospel] was used authoritatively by the orthodox and the Valentinians, and was acknowledged… as part of a corpus of four Gospels' (p. 128).

60) We find 377 quotations of Matthew in Clement's works, whereas the number of quotations of John is 150. The figures are drawn from P. M. Barnard, 'The Quotations of Clement of Alexandria from the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles', in *The Biblical Text of Clement of Alexandria in the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles* (Texts and Studies V/5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899) 1-64. Allusions have not been counted.

tian origin but do not show signs of influence of the Gospel of John. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, a work which has been connected with Alexandria, but also with Asia Minor and western Syria,[61] does not suggest knowledge of the Fourth Gospel—both works might have been contemporary—, although it shares with John some common ideas (on the other hand, it seems that the author of *Barnabas* knew well the Gospel of Matthew).[62] The extant fragments of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, the provenance and date of composition of which are debated, as also its dependence upon the Gospel of Matthew,[63] do not display reminiscences of or allusions to John. (The use of John by the *Egerton Gospel* and other fragments of gospels preserved in papyrus will be treated below under the papyrological evidence.) *2 Clement*, which according to some scholars might have been written in Egypt,[64] knows the Gospel of Matthew and perhaps the Gospel of Luke, but not the Fourth Gospel.[65] The *Apocalypse of Peter*, which may also have had an Egyptian origin, in its Ethiopian version displays the influence of Matthew and Luke, but not of John.[66]

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61) In favour of the traditional Alexandrian origin of the letter: L. W. Barnard, 'The 'Epistle of Barnabas' and its Contemporary Setting', *ANRW* II.27.1 (1993) 159-207. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity*, 89-90, considers it 'presumably the oldest complete writing from Alexandria in existence, probably dating from the beginning of the reign of Hadrian'. For an Asia Minor provenance: K. Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes* (Berlin–New York: De Gruyter, 1971); P. Pringent and R. A. Kraft, *Epître de Barnabé* (SChr 172; Paris: Cerf, 1971). In favour of a Syrian origin: F. S. Barcellona, *Epistola di Barnaba* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1975) and a previous work by P. Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le Christianisme primitif: l'Épître de Barnabé I-XVI et ses sources* (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1961).

62) Compare *Barn* 4,1 with John 8:34; *Barn*. 8,5 and 11,10 with John 6:51 and 20:31; *Barn*. 16,10 with John 5:27 and especially *Barn*. 11,11b with John 5:24. See Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 66-83. But the level of knowledge of the gospels by *Barnabas* is debated. For Poffet there are no gospel quotations in the epistle. See Poffet, 'Indices', 307.

63) Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha I*, 172-3. Bauer thinks that this gospel goes back to a period 'in which the Christians of Egypt used this gospel, and only this gospel, as their 'life of Jesus." (Bauer, *Orthodoxy and heresy*, 50). See also C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 50 note 1.

64) For instance, Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament II*, 241-3 and Pearson, 'Egypt', 332.

65) Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 139-64; Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 129-49.

66) Schneemelcher-Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha II*, 620-38; Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu*, 247-61; Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 314-18.

This rapid survey of writers and works that seem to have made use of John, has revealed little evidence for the preponderance of the Fourth Gospel over other Christian texts. From literary sources, the data we have for the early presence of John in Egypt does not differ much from that of Matthew. Writings and traditions of the second century which, then or in a later period, were considered 'heterodox' or gnostic and are apparently linked to Egypt, used the gospels in ways similar to those of Christians in other parts of the world: Matthew and John were the preferred texts, followed by Luke, whereas Mark was very little employed. It should also be noted that in some of these 'heterodox' writings John does not seem to be present, while we do find references to the Synoptics.

The same picture can be detected in the case of writings of undoubted 'orthodox' content, which may have been related to Egypt. John is used in some of these works, with no particular affection or detachment, together with Matthew, Luke and Mark. The way in which these writings made use of the Fourth Gospel does not differ notably from that of 'heterodox' writers. There may, however, be one exception and this is the *Epistula Apostolorum*. The use of John by the *Epistula* and the position of the Fourth Gospel in this work in relation to the Synoptics may suggest a preference for the Gospel of John among some 'orthodox' Christians. The problem is that it is not clear whether the *Epistula* originated in Egypt. In any case, this apparent preference for John in an 'orthodox' work is counterbalanced by the lack of use of the Fourth Gospel in some other works which may also have originated in an Egyptian setting and did not belong to the so called 'heterodox' groups.

All in all, we know for sure only that, by the end of the second century, both 'orthodox' Christians and Valentinians made use of the Fourth Gospel (as well as of the other canonical gospels) and considered it authoritative. Unfortunately, earlier than that, little can be said with certainty, although it is likely that in the first half of the second century the Gospel of John was accepted as an authoritative work by Christians of various tendencies. In the third century the picture becomes clearer. From then on the use of the Fourth Gospel, as one of the four canonical gospels, is well attested in literary sources hailing from Egypt.[67] Egyptian figures like Origen or Didymus or Dionysius, Peter or Alexander of Alexandria, share this

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[67] See J. C. Elowsky, *John. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, *New Testament IVa* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007) xxixff.

common understanding of the authority of the Gospel of John. There is nothing in this period, however, which leads us to think that the Fourth Gospel was preferred to the others, inasmuch as the four of them enjoyed the same canonical status.

2. Papyrological Evidence

The evidence from the papyri for the use of a particular gospel in Egypt during the second century is flimsy.[68] So far sixteen papyri of John have been published which are earlier in date than the great majuscule manuscripts of the fourth century.[69] All of these early papyri are codices, except P^{22}, which is a roll. If we pay attention only to the earliest manuscripts, we have two dated to the second century (P^{52} and P^{90}) and two which have been assigned to the second but also to the beginning of the third century (P^{66} and P^{75}).[70]

For the third century the number of known manuscripts increases. There are nine extant fragments of John dated to this century (P^{5}, P^{45}, P^{95}, P^{106}, P^{107}, P^{108}, P^{109}, P^{119}, P^{121}) and three which may be assigned to the late third or early fourth century (P^{22}, P^{28}, P^{39}). Although P^{80} is sometimes assigned to the third century, I would rather assign it to the late fourth or early fifth century.[71]

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68) Useful up-to-date information on the numbers of New Testament papyri can be found in E. J. Epp, 'Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?', in D. B. Capes, A. D. DeConick, H. K. Bond and T. A. Miller (eds.), *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007) 77-117 + 395-99. Two more papyri, one of 1 Corinthians (P^{123} = P.Oxy. LXXII 4844) and the other of 2 Corinthians (P^{124} = P.Oxy. LXXII 4845), have since been published.

69) The dates of the papyri are often disputed. Here, unless otherwise stated, I follow the consensual date as represented in K. Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: De Gruyter, ^{2}1994). See also, W. J. Elliott and D. C. Parker, *The New Testament in Greek IV. The Gospel According to St. John, Volume one: The Papyri* (Leiden–New York–Köln: Brill, 1995) 16-18. For those which are not included there, the date given is that of the *ed. pr*.

70) P^{5} might be included here, for it has also been dated to the end of the second century or beginning of the third century: see G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1967) 185.

71) This fragment presents a text of John with hermeneia. The *editio princeps* dates it to the third century, which is accepted by Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste*. But see other proposed dates in K. Aland, *Repertorium der griechischen christlichen Papyri*, I (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1976)

Besides the papyri, there is a parchment of John from Oxyrhynchus (0162) dated to the third/fourth century. [72]

If we look at the evidence for the Gospel of Matthew from the same period, we discover a similar spread of dates: one papyrus dated to the second century (P^{104})[73] and three assigned to the late second or early third century (P^{77}, P^{64} + P^{67}, P^{103}). We also find four fragments dated to the third century (P^{1}, P^{45}, P^{53}, P^{101}) and three dated to the late third or early fourth century (P^{70}, P^{37}, P^{102}). Two others are thought to be of the early fourth century (P^{86} and P^{110}).[74] I do not include P^{35}, which has been dated to the third or fourth century, because its hand is actually better assigned to the fifth or sixth century.[75]

There is also a parchment (0171), dated to the third/fourth century, which contains some passages of Matthew and Luke.

These fragments of Matthew are not as substantial, nor of the same quality, as some of the papyri of John, but they must surely have formed part of a codex which contained the complete text of the gospel. This is also the case with the texts of John which have been preserved in a very fragmentary condition.

The texts mentioned above, however, are not the only evidence for the presence of the gospels in the early Church in Egypt. In order to complete our knowledge of the use of the gospels at that time, we should also look for quotations from or allusions to John and Matthew in papyri dated to the period with which we are concerned, as has been done with the literary evidence.

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316. For instance, K. True, *APF* 19 (1969) 182 assigns it to the fourth century and E. G. Turner, *Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) 150, to the fifth or sixth century. See plate 46(a) in Elliott and Parker, *The New Testament in Greek IV.*

72) The date is not sure. *Ed. pr.* says: 'It may well be as old as any of the great biblical codices'.

73) P^{77} may well be dated to the late second century, as in the *ed. pr*.

74) I include both these papyri here, for the editor of P^{86} dates it to the beginning of the fourth century and the editor of P^{110} says that it is 'comparable to other texts of the first half of the fourth century'.

75) *Ed. pr.* dates it to the seventh century. Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste*, 30, accepts fourth century with doubts. Aland *Repertorium*, I, 257 shows the lack of unanimity, gathering proposals which range from the third to the sixth/seventh century. Cavallo, *Ricerche*, 115, dates it 'alla fine del V o inizio VI'. However, Turner, *Typology*, 147, assigns it to the third or fourth century.

There are seven papyri which witness to the Fourth Gospel:[76]

i) The *Egerton Gospel* [P.Egerton 2] (Van Haelst 586), dated to the second century and perhaps of Egyptian origin.[77] As is well known, its alleged independence from the canonical gospels is very much questioned, and there is a considerable number of scholars who think that its author shows dependence on the Synoptics and knows John, and that it may represent a reproduction of gospel stories from memory.[78]
ii) P.Lond.Christ. 2 [P.Egerton 3] (Van Haelst 691), a fragment of a commentary on a gospel, which has been dated to the third century and contains quotations of the New Testament, including John 1:14, 1:29 and 6:55. We do not know who wrote it. Suggested possible authors include Origen, Basilides, Heracleon, Irenaeus and Theophilus of Antioch.[79]
iii) PSI inv. 2101, from Oxyrhynchus, a commentary which may be ascribed to the Gospel of John in the style of Origen.[80] It is dated

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76) A good summary can be found in L. W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artefacts. Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006) esp. 209-29 and in the draft conspectus of the Macquarie University project *Papyri from the Rise of Christianity in Egypt*, 2005 (http://www.anchist.mq.edu.au/doccentre/PCEhomepage.htm).

77) H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat, *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Papyri* (London–Oxford: British Museum–Oxford University Press, 1935) 39, think that it may have come from Egypt or Asia. Pearson, 'Egypt', 332, suggests Syria.

78) See T. Niklas, 'Papyrus Egerton 2–the 'Unknown Gospel", *ExpTim* 118 (2007) 261-6 and D. Lührmann, *Die apokryph gewordenen Evangelien: Studien zu neuen Texten und zu neuen Fragen* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2004) 125-43. See also H. Y. Gamble, 'Egerton Papyrus 2', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (1992) 317-18; J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 37-40; D. Lührmann and E. Schlarb, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2000) 145-53; H.-J. Klaus, *Apocryphal Gospels. An Introduction* (London–New York: T & T Clark, 2003) 23-26; A. E. Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels: a Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts* (London–New York: T & T Clark, 2006) 84-86. For the presence of John in this text see also Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 302-6.

79) For the discussion on the possible connection with PSI 2101, see K. Aland, *Repertorium der griechischen christlichen Papyri*, II (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995) 68 and 69 (pp. 447-51).

80) M. Naldini, 'Nuovi frammenti Originiani (PSI inv. 2101)', *Prometheus* 4 (1978) 97-108; A. Guida, 'Un nuovo testo di Origene', *Atene e Roma* 5 (1978) 188-90; M. Naldini, 'Ancora sui frammenti Originiani (PSI inv. 2101)', *Prometheus* 6 (1980) 79-82.

by the editor to the second half of the third century. It quotes some passages of the Old Testament (Genesis and Psalms), 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and John 3:2-3.

iv) P.Merton II, 51 (Van Haelst 1147), dated by the editor to the third century. It may be a fragment of a homily or a commentary on Luke 6:7 or an uncanonical gospel. It seems to refer to John 7:30.

v) Chester Beatty, P.Beatty AC 1390, a Coptic fragment of a parchment dated to the third/fourth century, which contains John 10:17-13:38 in Coptic subachmimic and some mathematical exercises in Greek.[81]

vi) P.Oxy. V, 840 (Van Haelst 585), a miniature parchment book dating from the first half of the fourth century and containing a story of the Synoptic type.[82] The original text probably comes from the second century. Its provenance—Egypt or Palestine—and its character—whether Jewish-Christian or reflecting some debates on Christian controversies about the validity of water baptism—are debated. It seems to know all four of the canonical Gospels and has integrated elements from John 7:1-52 and 13:10.

vii) A fragment of a Manichean codex from Kellis which shows some similarities to the gnostic apocryphal *Acts of John*, dated to the beginning of the fourth century.[83]

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81) W. Brashear, W.-P. Funk, J. M. Robinson and R. Smith, *The Chester Beatty codex AC 1390: Mathematical School Exercises in Greek and John 10:17-13:38 in Subachmimic* (Chester Beatty Monographs 13; Peeters: Leuven–Paris, 1990). For some unknown reason, an unknown person used one or several papyrus quires partly inscribed with mathematical exercises to copy, after drawing a line across the width of the page below the last mathematical problem, the text of the Gospel of John beginning just before the end of 10:7. The scribe might have been interested in the text and aimed at a complete copy of the gospel or might have used part of the text for scribal practising. The repertorium of *Papyri from the Rise of Christianity in Egypt* (2005) from Macquarie University mentions an unpublished Coptic papyrus of the Chester Beatty collection dated to the same period.

82) M. J. Kruger, *The Gospel of the Savior: An Analysis of P. Oxy 840 and its Place in the Gospel Traditions of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). F. Bovon, '*Fragment Oxyrhynchus 840*, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity', *JBL* 119 (2000) 705-28.

83) G. Jenkins, 'Papyrus 1 from Kellis. A Greek Text with Affinities to the Acts of John', in J. N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995) 197-229. I. Gardner and K. A. Worp, 'Leaves From A Manichaean Codex', *ZPE* 117 (1997) 139-155. On the use of and reaction to this work on the Fourth Gospel, see note 51 above.

To Matthew we have the following witnesses:

i) The *Egerton Gospel* [P.Egerton 2], which, as has been already said, probably shows dependence on the Synoptics.
ii) P.Mich. XVIII, 763, a letter or a homily dated to the end of the second or beginning of the third century, which paraphrases two New Testament texts: Matthew 8:20 (= Luke 9:58) + 1 Corinthians 2:9.
iii) P.Lond.Christ. 2 [P.Egerton 3], also mentioned above, which apart from referring to John, quotes Matthew 4:5, 4:52-53 and 5:8.
iv) P.Vind.G. 2325 (Van Haelst 589), the so-called Fayyum Gospel, dated to the third century, which contains an allusion to the episode of the denial of Peter (Matthew 26:30-34, Mark 14:26-30).
v) P.Ant. II, 54 (Van Haelst 347), dated to the third century, which contains the Our Father in the Matthean version (Matthew 6:10-13).
vi) P.Merton II, 51, mentioned above, which refers to Matthew 12:35.
vii) P.Oxy. V, 840, also mentioned above, which may be a gospel of the Synoptic type and probably knows Matthew 23:13-32.

I do not include here P.Harr. I, 55 (Van Haelst 1076), a magical fragment, perhaps from Oxyrhynchus, dated to the second century, which vaguely recalls Matthew 5:34ff. and P.Bon I, 1 (Van Haelst 688), which perhaps contains a homily on Matthew 24:4ff. and the ending of Homily 35 on Luke by Origen, dated to the third century.[84]

These references must be approached with care. We do not know whether these fragments were parts of works which did not come from Egypt. Besides, there are some early papyri of gnostic texts, which probably came from Syria, but were read and, presumably, copied in Egypt.[85] However, the use which these texts make of the gospels is far too debatable to be included here.

All in all, and with due caution, because the dates assigned to all these papyri are at times disputed, it is possible to collate in the following table the evidence for texts of and references to the gospels of John and

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84) See Aland, *Repertorium*, II, 431-3.

85) Up to now, dating from the period of the second and the early fourth century, there have been published three papyri of the Gospel of Thomas, two of the Gospel of Mary, an Apocryphon of Moses and perhaps a Naasene Psalm. For details, see Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 228-9.

Matthew. (For the sake of completing the picture numbers for the gospels of Luke and Mark are also offered.)[86] First there is given:

(a) the number of papyri of John and Matthew, followed by
(b) the number of parchments and
(c) the number of papyri which contain quotations or allusions to these gospels

Century	*John*			*Matthew*			*Luke*			*Mark*		
	a	**b**	**c**	**a**	**b**	**c**	**a**	**b**	**c**	**a**	**b**	**c**
2nd	2		1	1		1			1			1
2nd /3rd	2			3		1			1?			
3rd	9		3	4		4	5		3?	1		2?
3rd/4th	3	1	1	3	1		1	2				
Early 4th			2	2		1						
	16	*1*	*7*	*13*	*1*	*7*	*6*	*2*	*5?*	*1*		*3?*
Total		**24**			**21**			**13?**			**4?**	

Bearing in mind the chances of survival and that the numbers are too small to be able to draw general conclusions, the figures above show that we cannot talk of a clear preponderance of the Fourth Gospel among early papyri.[87] The number of papyri of the earliest period does not differ much for John and Matthew. True, in the third century, the number of manuscripts of John is certainly high compared to other gospels. However, the

86) For the Gospel of Luke we have five papyri from the third century (P^4, P^{45}, P^{69}, P^{75} and P^{111}) and one from the late third or early fourth century (P^7). There are also two parchments assigned to third/fourth century: 0312 and 0171. As far as we know, for the period concerned, the Gospel of Mark is only attested by P^{45}. References in early papyri to Luke are made in the Egerton Gospel (see above), P.Merton II, 51, which is perhaps a homily reflecting the third gospel (third century), and P.Bon. I, 1 and P.Mich. XVIII, 763 (parallels of the text of Matthew), both quoted above. For the Gospel of Mark, we have perhaps the Egerton Gospel and P.Vind.G. 2325 (parallel of the text of Matthew).

87) These figures do not permit general conclusions. Even Colin Roberts' balanced judgment seems to fail when he says: 'the frequency of the Fourth Gospel with ten entries is striking, although Matthew with nine runs it close': Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, 60. See also note 62.

number of allusions to the Gospel of Matthew is the same as for those to John and brings closer the total number of attestations of both gospels for the period concerned. It is also worth noticing that the third century also shows an increase in the number of papyri of Luke. This is not surprising because at this time the four canonical gospels were well received.

In view of this, it seems better to talk of a general preponderance of John and Matthew over Luke, and especially over Mark, with a slight superiority of John over the other gospels.

3. Evidence for Doctrinal Trends?

As has been seen, the use of John by some gnostics in Egypt is not particularly distinctive compared to that of Matthew and Luke. The fact that the first commentary on John comes from Heracleon, a Valentinian native from Egypt—which has been one of the reasons, perhaps the most influential, for assuming a relationship between John, Egypt and the gnostics—does not necessarily modify the picture. A particular work of a particular gnostic author is not a definite proof that all gnostics preferred the Fourth Gospel to the others.[88]

Besides, if there had been a particular liking for the Gospel of John among gnostic groups in Egypt, we would have to explain why John was also popular among 'orthodox' Christians of a later period, as the papyri show. S. R. Llewelyn has compared the number of early and late papyri and parchments of the Gospel of John with other New Testament texts and pointed out that there is no significant difference between the proportions of papyri of John in the earlier and later periods. If some form of 'gnosticism' accounts for the number of papyri of the earlier period, we would need an explanation for the same level of popularity in the later period, when 'orthodoxy' was at its peak.[89] For Llewelyn, the numbers

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[88] Magri argues that through its lack of institutionalism, 'gnosticism', or at least certain groups within it, was more inclined than 'orthodox' authors to transmit its doctrines through written texts: 'Le genre "commentaire" se développe plus tôt dans le milieu gnostique, apparemment plus lié à la culture écrite que celui de la Grande Eglise qui privilégie la transmission orale. Il n'est dès lors pas étonnant que les citations à notre disposition proviennent en majorité de sources gnostiques, comme les textes examinés ici ou le commentaire d'Heracleon et celui de Ptolémée': Magri, 'Notes sur la réception de l'évangile de Jean', 173. Magri bases her argument on an article by Patricia Cox Miller, "Words with an Alien Voice'. Gnostics, Scripture and Canon', *JAAR* 57 (1989) 459-83.

[89] Llewelyn, 'Fragment of the Gospel of John', 246. Even after the publication of new

rather suggest a simple but persistent preference for the Gospel of John—and, I would add, the Gospel of Matthew—among the speakers of Greek in Egypt regardless of their personal doctrinal approach to those writings.

It could, moreover, be argued that, if some gnostics of the early Church in Egypt had a preference for John, 'orthodox' writers would probably have made greater use of it in the controversies with their local adversaries,[90] unless the 'orthodox' writers thought that the gospel itself was 'heterodox'. If this were the case, these 'orthodox' authors would have dealt with it as they dealt with other 'heterodox' writings, something which did not happen. In the case of writers like Clement and Origen, who refuted various forms of gnosticism, the gospel that they most quote is the Gospel of Matthew.[91] It does not seem likely that these authors used Matthew more than John because some gnostics had made use of the latter and somehow stigmatised it. Clement and Origen considered John

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papyri, the numbers of papyri he gives in 1994 are still valid for his argument. In p. 246 he gathers the following figures: 22 papyri of John (12 early and 10 late) versus 72 papyri of other New Testament texts (43 early and 29 late). The figures in 2008, according to Llewelyn's criteria, would be: 31 (17 early and 14 late) versus 94 (55 early and 39 late).

90) This is true in the case of the Gospel of Luke in Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem*, where there is no doubt that Marcion had a preference for the Third Gospel. If we consider the number of quotations in this work of Tertullian, we observe that Luke is quoted far more than any other gospel. According to the biblical indexes of C. Moreschini and R. Braun, *Tertullien. Contre Marcion* (Paris: Cerf, 1994-2004) there are 153 explicit quotations of Luke, 22 of Matthew, 5 of John and 1 of Mark. Of these, almost all correspond to book IV, which is devoted to refuting Marcion's gospel.

91) This is also true of Irenaeus. The most quoted New Testament writings in his *Adversus Haereses* are the letters of Paul, followed by Matthew, Luke, and John, with Matthew being the single most cited book. In book II, in which Irenaeus refutes the criticisms of the heretics, the most quoted New Testament book is also Matthew: B. Mutschler, *Irenäeus als johanneischer Theologe. Studien zur Schriftauslegung bei Irenäeus von Lyon* (Tübingen: Mohr / Siebeck, 2004) 82-5. See also D. J. Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel in Adversus Haereses* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998) 13-60. There is little difference in the number of gospel references between Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria: Irenaeus: 23,6 % vs. Clement: 21,6 % (Matthew); 15,3 % vs. 11,5 % (Luke); 11,7 % vs. 9,4 % (John); 1,5 % vs. 5,2 % (Mark) (Mutschler, *Irenäeus als johanneischer Theologe*, 101). The proportions in the quotations of the four gospels in Clement continues in Origen, for whom Matthew is still the most cited gospel. According to the figures of the third volume of the *Biblia Patristica*, in the works of Origen there are 7565 references to Matthew and 5119 references to John (3093 to Luke and 650 to Mark): J. Allenbach *et al.*, *Biblia Patristica: index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique, III: Origène* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981). Although it may be objected that it is quality, not quantity, that matters, the figures are illustrative.

canonical like the other gospels. It is also unlikely that, in making greater use of Matthew, both these authors wanted to reduce the importance John had been assigned by some gnostics in previous years. It seems more reasonable to think that the four gospels, and especially Matthew and John, were used by Christians of all tendencies, because these four writings were authoritative. Gnostic groups may have had recourse to the Gospel of John to support their doctrines, but there is no clear evidence that this was a general trend, nor that all of them made preferential use of the Fourth Gospel.

In summary: We cannot lean on papyrological evidence to bear out the doctrinal orientation of the early Egyptian Church. The argument that the number of early papyri of John supports Bauer's thesis on the gnostic character of earliest Christianity in Egypt seems very frail. The figures speak for themselves. Besides, we lack proof of the ideological orientation of those who held those papyri of John as a source of authority or inspiration for their thought and belief. A possible relationship between Egypt, gnostic groups and John should be looked for elsewhere. First, because the preference for John by gnostics is by no means clear. And secondly, because the use of John by 'orthodox' writers of the second century in Egypt points to a reception of the Fourth Gospel similar to that of Matthew and this is not thought to be the preferred gospel among gnostics.

If we have to judge from the evidence, the Gospel of Matthew may have been as popular and influential in Egypt as the Gospel of John—and this by itself does not exclude the possibility that Christian intellectuals in early Egypt were influenced by gnostic tendencies, for the use of Matthew among gnostics is prolific.[92] In any case, in conformity with what is now known of the origins of the Egyptian church and the variety of tendencies within it, the available evidence leads us to think that Matthew and John were equally used by the so-called 'orthodox' Christians and various gnostic movements or other 'heterodox' groups, with no particular preference for any of the two gospels except perhaps in the case of some Valentinians from the end of the second century who used John as vehicle for expounding their doctrines. Evidence suggests that Matthew and John were considered authoritative from a very early date and each Christian group in Egypt, if they really existed as such, adopted or underlined

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92) It is significant that according to the indexes of Evans, *Nag Hammadi Texts*, 482-516, the most cited gospel is Matthew (*ca*. 380; John is cited *ca*. 290 times). See also Kohler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums*, 339-427.

specific themes from these gospels to support their own particular views. Matthew and John were certainly the most accepted gospels, perhaps because they represented the two 'styles' within the most authoritative gospels, the 'somatic' and the 'spiritual', to use Clement's terms (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccles.* 6, 14, 6). The comparative lack of evidence for Luke, and above all for Mark, may be explained if the content of these two gospels were understood to be already included in Matthew. Matthew, the ecclesiastical gospel, and John, the spiritual one, covered the whole spectrum. But this is a question which goes beyond the limits of this paper.

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